

Case 3418

Specific names of nine Australian birds (Aves): proposed conservation

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Abstract. The purpose of this application, under Articles 24.2 and 81.2.3 of the Code, is to conserve the usage of nine specific names of Australian birds. The names, chosen as senior by First Revisers, were later replaced almost a hundred years ago by simultaneously published names on grounds of page precedence. The names chosen by page precedence, all of common and often popular Australian birds, have been in prevailing use ever since and are in universal use today. This application seeks to validate these names for reasons of nomenclatural stability.

Keywords. Nomenclature; taxonomy; *Anthochaera chrysoptera*; *Geopelia placida*; *Geopelia tranquilla*; *Gerygone olivacea*; *Grallina cyanoleuca*; *Leucosarcia melanoleuca*; *Lichenostomus melanops*; *Manorina melanocephala*; *Oriolus sagittatus*; *Psophodes olivaceus*; little wattlebird; peaceful dove; white-throated gerygone; magpielark; wonga pigeon; yellow-tufted honeyeater; noisy miner; olive-backed oriole; eastern whipbird; Australia.

1. The rule that First Revisers should determine priority for names published simultaneously for the same taxon was established at the beginning of international rules for the regulation of zoological nomenclature, in Article 28 of the *Règles internationales de la Nomenclature zoologique* (1905). It was repeated again in 1926 in an emended reprint in the *Proceedings of the Biological Society of Washington (International Congress of Zoology, 1926)*. The rule is addressed in Article 28, the last sentence of its first paragraph stating: 'If the names are of the same date, that selected by the first reviser shall stand'. Significantly, there is also a prominent Recommendation (c) at the very end of this article. It says: 'Other things being equal, that name is to be preferred which stands first in the publication (page precedence)'. This laid seeds for misinterpretation and incorrect action because ambiguities were perceived in the wording and context of both article and its recommendation, as they did not elaborate conditions for choice by first revisers. The statement of the First Reviser Principle, formulated in the first edition of the Code (1961, Article 24), reaffirmed in the current edition of the Code (1999, Article 24), has the meaning and application of that principle properly clarified and resolved. The recommendation on page precedence, moreover, has been dropped from the current Code.

2. The earlier ambiguities led the practitioners of nomenclature in Australian ornithology during the first half of the 20th century to view choice by first reviser as applying essentially to names for the same taxon that were published on the same date but in different works. G.M. Mathews and the Checklist Committee of the Royal Australasian Ornithologists Union were both the most notable and avowed followers of the *Règles* (1905). For names published in the same work, page precedence was followed, after Recommendation (c) to Article 28 in the *Règles* (1905). As a result, a number of names for the same species of Australian birds published in the same works, mainly by John Latham and John Gould, were changed from those used in the 19th century under the First Reviser Principle to those with page, and even line, precedence. The shifts began with Mathews (1908, 1911, 1912) and were established firmly in the second edition of the Official Checklist of the Birds of Australia (R.A.O.U. Checklist Committee, 1926).

3. The pertinent Latham and Gould names currently in use are *Columba melanoleuca* Latham, 1801 (p. 59) (currently *Leucosarcia melanoleuca*) for the wonga pigeon, *Geopelia placida* Gould, 1844 (p. 55) for the peaceful dove, *Psilopus olivaceus* Gould, 1838 (pl. 61) (currently *Gerygone olivacea*) for the white-throated gerygone; *Coryus cyanoleucus* Latham, 1801 (p. 25) (currently *Grallina cyanoleuca*) for the magpielark, *Coracias sagittata* Latham, 1801 (p. 26) (currently *Oriolus sagittatus*) for the olive-backed oriole, *Corvus olivaceus* Latham, 1801 (p. 26) (currently *Psophodes olivaceus*) for the eastern whipbird, *Gracula melanocephala* Latham, 1801 (p. 28) (currently *Manorina melanocephala*) for the noisy miner, *Turdus melanops* Latham, 1801 (p. 40) (currently *Lichenostomus melanops*) for the yellow-tufted honeyeater, and *Merops chrysopterus* Latham, 1801 (p. 33) (currently *Anthochaera chrysoptera*) for the little wattlebird. The changes are itemised in Table 1. Although technically invalid, these names chosen by line precedence have remained in use to this day in hundreds of references in systematic, ecological and general biological journals, as well as in all current checklists and manuals. Such references include the *Check-list of birds of the world* begun by J.L. Peters (Peters, 1937; Mayr & Greenway, 1962; Mayr & Paynter, 1964; Paynter, 1967; Mayr & Cottrell, 1986) and other global checklists (e.g. Sibley & Monroe, 1990; Dickinson, 2003; Gill & Wright, 2006), the Australian checklists and taxonomic manuals of Schodde (1975), Christidis & Boles (1994), Schodde & Mason (1997, 1999) and Clayton et al. (2006), the *Handbook of Australian, New Zealand and Antarctic birds* (Higgins & Davies, 1996; Higgins et al., 2001; Higgins & Peter, 2002; Peter, 2006), as well as the Australian bird atlases (Blakers et al., 1984; Barrett et al., 2003), and single-volume handbooks and field guides (e.g. Schodde & Tidemann, 1986; Pizzey & Knight, 1997; Simpson et al., 1999; Morecombe, 2003). Clearly, the names are in prevailing use, whereas none of their currently valid senior synonyms chosen by first reviser have been employed in any recent reference.

4. The species concerned are all common or familiar Australian birds. To reject their current names for senior names chosen under the First Reviser Principle would throw their nomenclature into disarray and disrupt the nomenclatural currency of the huge Australian and global literature dealing with them. Although all have remained unused for 70–80 years, except for *Geopelia tranquilla* Gould, 1844 (p. 56), the senior names were employed in the first decades of the 20th century. Here usage in the premier Australian ornithological journal, *The Emu*, which began publication in

Table 1. Pairs of simultaneously published names for the same species of Australian birds, one of which is not currently in use but senior by choice of the First Reviser, and the other in use through past (mis)application of the statement of page precedence. Current binomina in use for the taxa, and their English names, are taken from Dickinson (2003) and Gill & Wright (2006) respectively. Although usually cited as 1802 today, the date of publication of Latham's *Supplementum Indicis Ornithologici* is quoted as 1801 as on its title page, because circumstantial evidence for 1802 appears to be inadequate under Article 21.2 of the Code (Schodde et al., 2007).

Currently used binomen and English name	Family	Junior names (currently in use) by page precedence	Senior names (currently not in use) by choice of First Reviser
<i>Anthochaera chrysoptera</i> (Latham, 1801) – little wattlebird	MELIPHAGIDAE – honeyeaters	<i>Merops chrysopterus</i> Latham, 1801 (p. 33) – from Mathews (1908)	<i>Certhia mellivora</i> Latham, 1801 (p. 37) – by G.R. Gray (1843)
<i>Geopelia placida</i> Gould, 1844 – peaceful dove	COLUMBIDAE – pigeons and doves	<i>Geopelia placida</i> Gould, 1844 (p. 55) – from Mathews (1908)	<i>Geopelia tranquilla</i> Gould, 1844 (p. 56) – by Gould (1845)
<i>Gerygone olivacea</i> (Gould, 1838) – white-throated gerygone	ACANTHIZIDAE – Australian warblers	<i>Psilopus olivaceus</i> Gould, 1838 (pl. 61) – from Mathews (1913)	<i>Psilopus albogularis</i> Gould, 1838, pl. 61) – by Gould (1848)
<i>Grallina cyanoleuca</i> (Latham, 1801) – magpielark	MONARCHIDAE – monarch flycatchers	<i>Corvus cyanoleucus</i> Latham, 1801 (p. 25) – from Mathews (1912)	<i>Gracula picata</i> Latham, 1801 (p. 29) – by Strickland (1843)
<i>Leucosarcia melanoleuca</i> (Latham, 1801) – wonga pigeon	COLUMBIDAE – pigeons and doves	<i>Columba melanoleuca</i> Latham, 1801 (p. 59) – from Mathews (1911, 1912)	<i>Columba picata</i> Latham, 1801 (p. 59) – by Strickland (1843)
<i>Lichenostomus melanops</i> (Latham, 1801) – yellow-tufted honeyeater	MELIPHAGIDAE – honeyeaters	<i>Turdus melanops</i> Latham, 1801 (p. 40) – from Mathews (1908)	<i>Muscicapa auricomis</i> Latham, 1801 (p. 49) – by Strickland (1843)
<i>Manorina melanocephala</i> (Latham, 1801) – noisy miner	MELIPHAGIDAE – honeyeaters	<i>Gracula melanocephala</i> Latham, 1801 (p. 28) – from Mathews (1912)	<i>Merops garrulus</i> Latham, 1801 (p. 34) – by Gould (1865)
<i>Oriolus sagittatus</i> (Latham, 1801) – olive-backed oriole	ORIOOLIDAE – Old World orioles	<i>Coracias sagittata</i> Latham, 1801 (p. 26) – from Mathews (1908, as <i>sagittarius</i> , sic)	<i>Gracula viridis</i> Latham, 1801 (p. 28) – by G.R. Gray (1843)
<i>Psophodes olivaceus</i> (Latham, 1801) – eastern whipbird	EUPETIDAE – whipbirds and railbblers	<i>Corvus olivaceus</i> Latham, 1801 (p. 26) – from Mathews (1912)	<i>Muscicapa crepitans</i> Latham, 1801 (p. 51) – by G.R. Gray (1843)

1901, is instructive (references in McGill, 1953). The name *picata* Latham for the wonga pigeon was used 22 times to 1920, *albogularis* Gould for the white-throated gerygone 41 times to 1924, *picata* Latham for the magpielark 159 times to 1921, *viridis* Latham for the olive-backed oriole 20 times to 1922, *crepitans* Latham for the eastern whipbird 52 times to 1920, *garrulus* Latham for the noisy miner 95 times to 1926, *auricomis* Latham for the yellow-tufted honeyeater 16 times to 1910, and *mellivora* Latham for the little wattlebird 31 times to 1920. Consequently, none can now be replaced under Article 23.9.2 of the Code (Reversal of Precedence). Such usage may seem considerable for several species, but the names have not since been employed as valid in *The Emu*, or elsewhere. Replacing *picata* Latham for the

magpielark in 1921, for example, was *cyanoleuca* Latham, which was used 211 times in *The Emu* alone between 1922 and 1950 (McGill, 1953) and it is now in exclusive use everywhere.

5. The circumstances involving *Geopelia tranquilla* Gould, 1844 concern its occasional ongoing use for a southern subspecies of the simultaneously published *Geopelia placida* Gould, 1844 (p. 55) (Peters, 1937; Goodwin, 1967; Frith, 1982; Gibbs et al., 2001; cf. Table 1). Wherever *Geopelia tranquilla* and *Geopelia placida* have been combined taxonomically, either at specific or subspecific rank, *Geopelia placida* has nevertheless been treated as the senior name ever since the first decades of the 20th century (e.g. Mathews, 1912, 1913, 1927; R.A.O.U. Checklist Committee, 1926; Peters, 1937; Wolters, 1975–1982; White & Bruce, 1986; Sibley & Monroe, 1990; Johnstone, 1992; Baptista et al., 1997; Schodde, 1997; Dickinson, 2003; Clayton et al., 2006). These circumstances are taken into account in the proposal of conditional suppression of *Geopelia tranquilla* Gould, 1844 to provide that the senior name (*Geopelia tranquilla*) may be used only when the taxa denoted by the names are regarded as distinct.

6. Because of the disruption to the nomenclature of Australian birds that would result from reintroduction of the disused synonyms, chosen by First Revisers and listed in Table 1, it is proposed that these names be suppressed.

7. The International Commission on Zoological Nomenclature is accordingly asked:

- (1) to use its plenary power to suppress the following specific names for the Purposes of the Principle of Priority but not for those of the Principle of Homonymy:
 - (a) *albogularis* Gould, 1838, as published in the binomen *Psilopus albogularis*;
 - (b) *auricomis* Latham, 1801, as published in the binomen *Muscicapa auricomis*;
 - (c) *crepitans* Latham, 1801, as published in the binomen *Muscicapa crepitans*;
 - (d) *garrulus* Latham, 1801, as published in the binomen *Merops garrulus*;
 - (e) *mellivora* Latham, 1801, as published in the binomen *Certhia mellivora*;
 - (f) *picata* Latham, 1801, as published in the binomen *Columba picata*;
 - (g) *picata* Latham, 1801, as published in the binomen *Gracula picata*;
 - (h) *viridis* Latham, 1801, as published in the binomen *Gracula viridis*;
- (2) to give the name *placida* Gould, 1844, as published in the binomen *Geopelia placida* Gould, precedence over the name *tranquilla* Gould, 1844, as published in the binomen *Geopelia tranquilla*, whenever the two are considered to be synonyms;
- (3) to place on the Official List of Specific Names in Zoology the following names:
 - (a) *chrysopterus* Latham, 1801, as published in the binomen *Merops chrysopterus*;
 - (b) *cyanoleucus* Latham, 1801, as published in the binomen *Corvus cyanoleucus*;
 - (c) *melanocephala* Latham, 1801, as published in the binomen *Gracula melanocephala*;
 - (d) *melanoleuca* Latham, 1801, as published in the binomen *Columba melanoleuca*;
 - (e) *melanops* Latham, 1801, as published in the binomen *Turdus melanops*;
 - (f) *olivaceus* Latham, 1801, as published in the binomen *Corvus olivaceus*;

- (g) *olivaceus* Gould, 1838, as published in the binomen *Psilopus olivaceus*;
 - (h) *placida* Gould, 1844, as published in the binomen *Geopelia placida*, with the endorsement that it is to be given precedence over the name *tranquilla* Gould, 1844, as published in the binomen *Geopelia tranquilla* whenever the two are considered to be synonyms;
 - (i) *sagittata* Latham, 1801, as published in the binomen *Coracias sagittata*;
 - (j) *tranquilla* Gould, 1844, as published in the binomen *Geopelia tranquilla*, with the endorsement that it is not to be given priority over the name *placida* Gould, 1844, as published in the binomen *Geopelia placida*, whenever the two are considered to be synonyms;
- (4) to place on the Official Index of Rejected and Invalid Specific Names in Zoology the following names:
- (a) *albogularis* Gould, 1838, as published in the binomen *Psilopus albogularis* and as suppressed in 1(a) above;
 - (b) *auricomis* Latham, 1801, as published in the binomen *Muscicapa auricomis* and as suppressed in 1(b) above;
 - (c) *crepitans* Latham, 1801, as published in the binomen *Muscicapa crepitans* and as suppressed in 1(c) above;
 - (d) *garrulus* Latham, 1801, as published in the binomen *Merops garrulus* and as suppressed in 1(d) above;
 - (e) *mellivora* Latham, 1801, as published in the binomen *Certhia mellivora* and as suppressed in 1(e) above;
 - (f) *picata* Latham, 1801, as published in the binomen *Columba picata* and as suppressed in 1(f) above;
 - (g) *picata* Latham, 1801, as published in the binomen *Gracula picata* and as suppressed in 1(g) above;
 - (h) *viridis* Latham, 1801, as published in the binomen *Gracula viridis* and as suppressed in 1(h) above;

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